

The last such item prepared by NIO (Intelligence Memorandum "The View from the Kremlin," which you ended up handcarrying) also was addressed to HAK as SecState. Should this type of thing really be addressed to him as SecState? Anything addressed that way goes to State Department rather than to the White House.

OK  
But send to Snowcroft -  
MOD/CDF Pages  
2-6 (only).

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April 23, 1974

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Politburo Divisions Over Detente?

SUMMARY

- Recent setbacks to the Soviet position in the Middle East are apparently causing some recrimination in the Soviet leadership.*
- Should a scapegoat be required, Gromyko would in some respects be a logical choice. Gromyko is so closely identified with Brezhnev and detente, however, that his dismissal would call Brezhnev's own position and policy into question.*
- Gromyko will probably survive, but Brezhnev and other proponents of detente are likely to be more defensive and to take a selectively tougher line than might otherwise be the case.*

1. Two recent reports, summarized at Annex, raise the question of Politburo divisions over aspects of detente. Clearly some disappointments have accumulated: the Soviet Union has yet to be granted Most Favored Nation status by the Congress, the large economic deals have been slow in coming and there has been little give in the Western position at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Watergate is also a disturbing uncertainty.

2. There have always been varying degrees of enthusiasm for detente among Politburo members, based on their differing sense of priorities in Soviet foreign policy, and argument over specific issues seems probable. But the Middle East situation is the clearest present cause of disarray. It can be argued that detente and associated restraint is to blame for Sadat's increasing coolness in 1972-1973. It could also be argued in Politburo circles that detente did not restrain the US in the Arab-Israeli war and has not kept

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the US from playing an independent role with Egypt since. This situation has been particularly embarrassing for Foreign Minister Gromyko. The striking contrast between the successes of US diplomacy in the Middle East and the paucity of such successes for the Soviet Union has apparently acted as a catalyst for recrimination.

3. In some respects, Gromyko would be an easy choice for scapegoat if the opposition reached such intensity that a victim had to be provided. He lacks a strong institutional political base; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has never played the kind of role in Kremlin politics that the Ministry of Defense and the KGB do. A newcomer to the Politburo, he has not had time to establish himself in the network of overlapping alliances based on shared experiences and common interests. During his long service in the Foreign Ministry he has been characterized as an executor of foreign policy rather than a formulator.

4. Arguing against his ouster, however, is his close identification with Brezhnev as a member of the latter's foreign policy "team." Because his sole claim to Politburo membership rests on this identification, it would be unusually difficult to fire him without bringing into question both the policy of detente itself and the position of the General Secretary who has espoused it. The argument would have to be made that Gromyko failed disastrously in carrying out a policy that had been well formulated; this would fool no one.

5. In previous ousters from the Kremlin's charmed circle, the causes have been mixed. Shelest, for example, does seem to have opposed President Nixon's visit to Moscow in 1972, but he also committed two even more serious sins: he broke ranks and continued his opposition after a Politburo decision had been taken, and he had already laid himself open to attack for his espousal of Ukrainian economic and cultural interests.

6. A Gromyko ouster could be read by the party's cognoscenti as an attack on the General Secretary. Dissatisfaction over losses in the Middle East, which might

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yet be recouped, does not seem to be a sufficiently overriding reason for opponents of detente to risk raising this spectre, particularly since Brezhnev's own record shows his willingness to trim rather than stonewall in the face of serious opposition.

7. The magnitude of the Soviet setbacks in the Middle East may not be great enough to oust Gromyko, much less seriously threaten Brezhnev's position, but there can be little doubt that the setbacks weaken the position of both men, and weaken the pro-detente force in the Politburo and the Central Committee. The damage could be repaired in part by a breakdown of disengagement negotiations with a concomitant ebbing of US influence in the region. The chances are, however, that events will continue to run against the Soviets in the Middle East, and that Moscow's efforts to solidify its position in Syria and Iraq will serve only to mitigate rather than turn around or compensate for the loss of Soviet prestige and influence in the region.

8. These Middle East circumstances are likely to incline Brezhnev and other proponents of detente to be at least selectively more defensive, and inclined to take a tougher line than might otherwise be the case. Brezhnev's and Podgorny's speeches during the recent Asad visit are evidence of this; so too is Soviet propaganda aimed at thwarting US objectives and policies in the Middle East. The Soviets will also try to use their influence to keep the Arabs from agreeing to any partial or full settlement that seems to freeze Moscow out of a major role in the Middle East. This is easier said than done, however, for as the Soviets have found out with Asad as well as Sadat, the Arabs are not much inclined to listen to Soviet advice when it seems to serve Soviet rather than Arab interests.

9. The larger question is whether the losses in the Middle East are sufficiently unsettling as to cause a fundamental reorientation of Moscow's detente policy. This seems highly unlikely because: (a) Brezhnev's own political

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fortunes are tied to detente, and while he may trim sails, he is not likely to reverse course because Sadat has re-orientated Egypt's foreign policy away from the Soviet Union; and (b) fundamental reasons for detente, such as the need for western technology and the need to thwart China, are not changed by the Middle East reversals.

10. It is more likely that Brezhnev will be alert for opportunities to demonstrate -- to both the US and his own hardliners -- that if detente does not inhibit the US from strengthening its position in a vital part of the world at the USSR's expense, it does not inhibit the USSR from responding in kind, either somewhere else or on bilateral issues with the US.

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4/25/74

Executive Registry

74-1362/1

NIO

National  
Intelligence  
Officers

DATE: 25 April 1974

TO: Mr. Colby

SUBJECT: The Middle East and the Soviet  
Leadership

You expressed interest in a reading  
on how such problems as the Middle East  
have impacted on the Soviet leadership  
consensus behind detent. Here is a piece  
from OCI [redacted] STAT

[redacted] at our request they  
concentrated on Gromyko's role.

[redacted]  
Acting NIO/USSR-EE

STAT

*Frank*  
4/25/74

ER

MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable Henry A. Kissinger  
The Secretary of State

Executive Register  
74/1362

I asked my analysts to look into the evidence about how such problems as the Middle East have impacted on the Soviet leadership consensus behind detente. In particular, I asked them to concentrate upon Gromyko's role. You may be interested in the results of their labors.

W. E. Colby  
Director

24 April 1974  
(DATE)

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable James R. Schlesinger  
The Secretary of Defense

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